

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMHERST SCHOOLS

Fiscal Year 2011

The Amherst School Committee is an elected body responsible for the public education of all children in kindergarten through grade six and of pre-school children with substantial special needs in our community. The Committee meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month and welcomes citizen participation at each meeting. The members of this committee also serve as Amherst's members of the Regional School Committee which has responsibility for the educational programs for children in grades seven through twelve.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in the Amherst elementary schools has declined annually for the past five years, dropping from 1,396 in 2006-2007 to 1,186 in 2010-2011. Student enrollment as of October 1, 2010 was:

GRADE	STUDENTS
K	130
1	165
2	175
3	167
4	190
5	175
6	184
TOTAL	<u>1,186</u>

Forty-two children from Amherst attended Charter Schools and 24 Amherst children attended other school districts under the School Choice program.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

In February 2011 following a national search, the Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committees appointed Maria Geryk as the permanent Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Geryk had served the district as Interim Superintendent twice. As the districts' Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Geryk was appointed Interim Superintendent from March 2009 after the resignation of Interim Superintendents Helen Vivian and Al Sprague until the appointment of Alberto Rodriguez to the permanent position on July 1, 2010. Following the resignation of Superintendent Rodriguez in March 2010, Ms. Geryk served again in an interim capacity until her appointment as permanent Superintendent of Schools.

The districts were also honored to have on staff both the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and the Massachusetts Paraprofessional of the Year in FY 11. Wilma Ortiz, ELL Teacher at Amherst Regional Middle School, was appointed Teacher of the Year and Jean Fay, Crocker Farm, was appointed Paraprofessional of the Year.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS IN FY 11

- Mark's Meadow Elementary School was closed, resulting in significant savings to the district. District boundary lines were redrawn for the Crocker Farm, Fort River and Wildwood Elementary Schools with a goal of increasing diversity and socio-economic equity at each school. Following a well-planned and executed transition, school opened in September and warmly welcomed students, families and staff. To further evaluate this major transition, follow up forums were held at each of the elementary schools to hear from families about their experience and how their children are doing in their new schools.
- A community forum to discuss the new Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Law was held on December 14, 2010 at Fort River Elementary School. In compliance with the new law, the Districts' *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan* was submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on December 30, 2010.
- An elementary Spanish language program was introduced in grades 1-2 in accordance with School Committee Policy. While it is still early in the process, the program has been enthusiastically embraced by students and staff at all three elementary schools.
- The Amherst School District is working with The Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to provide an Achievement Academy for students in grades four through six whose MCAS scores are in the warning/failing category.
- Amherst Leisure Services, John Musante, and current after-school providers are working in partnership with the Amherst School District to implement a consistent vision of the after-school programs at each of the three elementary schools. This vision includes access for all students to academic interventions and support; quality enrichment activities including art, music and theater; and cultural affinity groups. To provide a continuum of supports for our students, EdJobs funds were allocated to implement an after school program at Amherst Regional Middle School to provide enrichment and academic intervention, and CES was awarded a 21st Century Grant which provides an after school program for students at Amherst Regional High School.
- The district, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts, created a system-wide initiative to improve instruction. This partnership includes collaboration between district and site-level instructional leadership teams to develop and implement collaborative teacher teams that examine student achievement. In addition, we will implement a strategy called "instructional rounds" which provides a process for observation, data gathering, and analysis of instruction to inform district and school decision making. This intensive, systems-level work focuses on the instructional core, which will result in improved outcomes for all students at all levels.
- The baseline assessment of the district's current intervention supports was completed, and the district is in the process of formalizing a district Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Implementation of the universal screening tool began in FY 11, which will move the district forward in data-based decision making efforts. Teachers will be able to access real-time student data to inform instruction, target intervention, and monitor progress. The district is also moving toward creation and implementation of a tiered intervention program which will provide multi-leveled instruction in classrooms.
- The School-Wide Positive Behavior System model was piloted at Crocker Farm Elementary School with great success. This will become a district-wide, proactive

systems approach to improving social and academic competency for all students.

- Beth Graham joined the district as the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment in July 2010, a position that has been filled on either an interim or part-time basis since 2006. Ms. Graham has brought a much-needed focus and energy to the district's work in these critical areas.
- An evaluation of the district mathematics program was completed.
- Barry Brooks, retired ARMS Guidance Counselor, was named Ombudsperson for the Amherst Regional Public Schools. When situations arise in which established, formal procedures have failed to result in resolution, the Ombudsperson serves as an independent, impartial, confidential resource to assist parents and community members in resolving complaints, conflicts and other school-related issues. The role of the Ombudsperson is as a designated neutral party who listens, answers questions, receives and provides resources and information, suggests referrals, and helps individuals develop options to resolve concerns and conflicts.
- Family Outreach of Amherst collaborated with the district on a project designed to increase family engagement in the schools. This grant-funded family outreach focused primarily, but not exclusively, on working with income-eligible families in the South Amherst area and was designed to bridge the gap between the community and schools in order to ensure that all families feel truly a part of their school community.
- The district partnered with families, friends, community members, and organizations to provide to students over 200 backpacks filled with school supplies for the start of the 2010-2011 school year.
- The district worked with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, Representative Ellen Story, Parent Guardian Organizations, area Inter-Faith Groups, local colleges and the University, the Town of Amherst, the Human Rights Commission, and many others to reinvigorate the "First Day" event on the Town Common so that our families and community members can celebrate with our children the start of a new school year.
- Title I funds supported a Parent/Guardian Education and Discussion Series including topics such as social skills, routines (including homework), discipline, and communication.
- The district implemented communication strategies such as coffee with the superintendent; an enhanced web page; electronic superintendent's updates; and use of Amherst Media to present topics such as: 1) Teacher Collaboration and Instructional Improvement, 2) Equity=Access, Participation, and Benefit, 3) ARMS & MA Teacher of the Year, 4) ARHS NEASC Accreditation & Parent Series, 5) Early Childhood Learning, and 6) Partnerships.
- The Town of Amherst offered the expertise of Dr. Barbara Love to provide district staff a workshop regarding the issue of classism.
- In partnership with Five Colleges, Inc., Superintendent Geryk formed the Five College Superintendent's Advisory Council with the mission of supporting the collective work of educating students Pre-K through grade 16. The Five College Superintendent's Advisory Council focuses on ways to strengthen existing partnerships as well as on ideas for creating new individual and systems-level partnerships to benefit all students.
- The district's strong partnership with Amherst College was expanded when Amherst College President Tony Marx agreed to provide funding for the district to employ a Volunteer Coordinator. Kimberly Stender was hired for this role, and her work focuses on

recruiting and training volunteers from local colleges, UMass, and throughout the communities to serve a variety of functions in the schools.

- 2010-2011 was the second year of the ARRA Technology Grant Robotics project, which targets STEM, science, engineering, technology and math using Lego Robotics. One of the grant's goals is to create a greater interest in STEM for girls. Year one focused on a grade five to eight cohort with the Lego Mindstorms NXT. In this second year, funds were used to target the second to fourth grades using the Lego WeDO robotics kits.
- The work plan for Race to The Top was created and accepted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- A comprehensive spending plan was developed and presented to the Amherst School Committee.
- A Capital Plan for the Regional Schools was developed and approved.
- The district is comprised of five union groups, all of which have contracts that expired on June 30, 2011. Teachers, clerical/media staff, and paraprofessionals are represented by the Amherst-Pelham Education Association (APEA); administrators comprise the Amherst-Pelham Administrators Association (APAA), and custodial/maintenance staff are represented by AFSCME/AFL-CIO. A contract has been ratified by the APAA and AFSCME, and negotiations are currently ongoing with APEA.
- The district created inquiry groups to research a number of topics which are critical to the improvement of programming for all students. These groups provided recommendations to the Superintendent, including action steps and timelines, and these recommendations will be reviewed and implemented by the District Instructional Leadership Team. Topics reviewed in FY 11 included Elementary Daily Schedule, Equity (barriers & community mapping), Response to Intervention, Positive Behavioral System Model, Co-Teaching (inclusion), Professional Development Models, and Tracking/Grouping.
- Continued professional development was offered in the areas of Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop Model, the Mathematics workshop model, the SIOP model, Teacher Collaboration, Instructional Rounds, data-based decision making, as well as other mandated professional development. A comprehensive professional plan that is connected to district and school goals was also developed for FY 12.
- The School Committee and administration had groups study the following topics: grade six moving to ARMS, governance, and later secondary start time. The Superintendent will present a recommendation regarding a later secondary start time at the October 25, 2011 Regional School Committee meeting. Work on the other topics is ongoing.
- The science program evaluation began in FY 11 and will continue in FY 12.

Amherst School Committee

Irv Rhodes, Chair

Catherine Sanderson, Vice-Chair (through 3/29/11)

Katherine Appy, (from 3/30/11)

Rick Hood

Steve Rivkin

Rob Spence

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS FISCAL YEAR 2011

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee

Rick Hood, Chair
Catherine Sanderson, Vice-Chair (through 3/29/11)
Katherine Appy (as of 3/30/11)
Kip Fonsh
Debbie Gould
Kristen Luschen
Nora Maroulis (through 3/3/11)
Irv Rhodes
Steve Rivkin
Rob Spence
Kathy Weilerstein (as of 3/4/11)

The Regional School Committee represents the four communities that comprise the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District: Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. It is responsible for the direction and support of the educational programs for students in Grades 7 through 12 from each of these towns. Committee meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions as prescribed by law, and are held regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday evenings of each month. Opportunity is available at every meeting for public participation.

STUDENTS

Enrollments on October 1 over the last ten years were as follows:

2001-2002—2,068	2006-2007—1,877
2002-2003—2,037	2007-2008—1,817
2003-2004—2,043	2008-2009—1,764
2004-2005—1,949	2009-2010—1,691
2005-2006—1,924	2010-2011—1,592

In addition, 42 Regional students were enrolled in Vocational Schools as of October 1, 2010. Eighteen students attended other school districts under the state's School Choice Program, and 65 students were enrolled at charter schools. Tuition for district students to attend these schools is paid by the Regional School District.

As of October 1, 2010, enrollment in the Regional Middle and Senior High Schools was as follows:

2010-2011

Grade	Total Students
7	222
8	253
9	268
10	283
11	277
12	289
TOTALS	1,592

Of the 270 graduates in the class of 2011, 205 are Amherst residents.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS IN FY 11

The core mission of the Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools is to “provide all students with a high quality education that enables them to be contributing members of a multiethnic, multicultural, pluralistic society.” This informs everything we do as educators, and during FY 11, a number of steps were taken toward that lofty goal:

- The district, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts, created a system-wide initiative to improve instruction. This partnership includes collaboration between district and site-level instructional leadership teams to develop and implement collaborative teacher teams that examine student achievement. In addition, we will implement a strategy called “instructional rounds” which provides a process for observation, data gathering, and analysis of instruction to inform district and school decision making. This

intensive, systems-level work focuses on the instructional core, which will result in improved outcomes for all students at all levels.

- The baseline assessment of the district's current intervention supports was completed, and the district is in the process of formalizing a district Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Implementation of the universal screening tool began in FY 11, which will move the district forward in data-based decision making efforts. Teachers will be able to access real-time student data to inform instruction, target intervention, and monitor progress. The district is also moving toward creation and implementation of a tiered intervention program which will provide multi-leveled instruction in classrooms.
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- The Town of Amherst offered the expertise of Dr. Barbara Love to provide district staff a workshop regarding the issue of classism.
- Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, Bedford Central School District, and the Public Schools of Brookline hosted the MSAN ELL Mini-Conference *Beyond Labels: Promising Practices to Support English Language Learners across MSAN Districts* on December 7-8, 2010. The mini-conference included presentations by nationally known scholars/authors including Dr. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, New York University; Dr. Maria Serpa, Lesley University; Dr. Julie Coppola, Boston University; and Dr. Diep Nygan, Evanston Township. District staff members Dr. Marta M. Guevara, Renata Pienkawa, Molly Watkins, Therese Chehade, Dr. Wilma Ortiz, and Joan Snowdon also made presentations.
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